

Canadian food industry alliance to develop code of practice

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<https://www.grocerybusiness.ca/news/canadian-food-industry-alliance-to-develop-code-of-practice>

Several food and beverage industry associations have formed an alliance to help government in developing a code of practice.

The alliance was formed in response to a Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) agriculture and agri-food ministers' working group created in November 2020 to identify potential measures to safeguard Canada's food supply chain and ensure the supply of food at affordable price.

The news follows on the heels of an earlier announcement by some other industry associations in the food and consumer products sectors that are proposing a regulated framework for a grocery code of conduct and have formed an online hub to inform consumers about it. The initiative was first proposed by Food, Health and Consumer Products of Canada (FHCP) and Empire Company Limited.

Grocery Business reached out to Diane J. Brisebois, president and CEO of the Retail Council of Canada, a member of the new alliance, to ask about the code.

"There are common elements in both proposed codes of conduct with one being the need for contractual certainty and the need to invest in a Canadian food supply chain to ensure it remains healthy and continues to growth. However, one element the alliance felt strongly about was the danger of going into the regulatory rabbit hole because this is under provincial and territorial jurisdictions, not federal jurisdictions. We were concerned with ending up with multiple different codes of practice across the country, regulated by different provinces."

Brisebois says it became clear to the members of the alliance that a provincially and territorially regulated code of conduct would increase red tape and costs. The alliance's goal is to create a harmonized code of conduct across the country.

"We understand there is some criticism about not having a regulatory framework, but there are examples of codes of practices around the world that are mandatory but not regulated. We are not saying the principles of the code of conduct proposed earlier are wrong; we're suggesting a process that will include the entire supply chain, independent grocers, processors and producers, and provide a collaborative solution for Canada."

The alliance includes the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFIG), the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), Food and Beverage Canada, the Quebec Food Processing Council, Quebec Food Retailers Association, and the Retail Council of Canada.

In an official statement, the alliance says that "any code of practice must be developed in Canada for Canada, hence it must be developed by industry for industry and must reflect and respect the unique elements of Canada's food supply chain and federated system of government."

Gary Sands, senior vice president of public policy for alliance member CFGV, says the new proposal better reflects the needs of independents.

“This is a positive development because at least now we have consensus that there should be a code even if there are differences in what it should look like. CFGV has long supported a code but we don’t support a regulated one, we support a mandatory code, and we know it works because we already have examples of a voluntary code in the debit card industry.”

He adds that for independents, “a non-regulated approach is more flexible and realistic because smaller grocers don’t have the infrastructure or financial resources to challenge laws.”

Details of the alliance's proposal can be found [here](#).

The earlier announcement of a regulated grocery code of conduct, first proposed by the Food, Health and Consumer Products of Canada (FHCP) and Empire Company Limited, is supported by an additional eight associations in agriculture, food and consumer products sectors who have formed a new online hub to inform consumers about the initiative. The associations involved in this proposal for a regulated approach include the Canadian Health Food Association, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Dairy Processors Association of Canada, Food and Beverage Ontario, Food Processors of Canada and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Michael Graydon, CEO of FHCP says “the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized more than ever that Canada cannot afford to continue allowing unbalanced relationships between large grocery retailers and their suppliers to weaken our food supply and self-reliance. Governments must legislate now to ensure basic fairness, correct this imbalance, and support Canadian farmers, manufacturers, jobs, and most importantly consumers.”

Graydon says the “Grocery Supply Code of Practice for Canada” was shared with the Federal-Provincial-Territorial agriculture and food ministers’ working group and elected officials and notes that this code of practice is based on international codes of practice, most notably the U.K. code.

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